



**Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance**

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## ***News Release***

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### **New Report Documents Value of Wildlife Habitat and Open Space in South Park**

A preliminary review of studies, maps and data regarding the South Park area has found significant evidence of the importance of the area to the overall ecological health of the larger Jackson Hole ecosystem. The report is available on the Conservation Alliance website at [www.jhalliance.org/Library/Reports/SoParkReport.6-09.pdf](http://www.jhalliance.org/Library/Reports/SoParkReport.6-09.pdf) and at the Alliance office, 685 S. Cache in Jackson.

An examination of roughly 40 reports, studies, correspondences and assessments pertaining to the South Park and Tribal Trails connector road areas has found well-established evidence that: Elk, mule deer and moose use the area for annual migrations; raptors use the open agricultural fields for foraging, and the cottonwood and aspen stands for resting; songbirds and migratory birds use the wetlands and riparian areas for feeding and resting; and waterfowl, fish, amphibians and reptiles use the wetlands, rivers, riparian habitats, creeks and irrigation ditches.

The literature review - which the Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance submitted to Teton County and Town of Jackson officials on Tuesday, June 23 - comes as local government officials propose a significant shift in policies regarding growth and development in the South Park area.

Historically, and in the current Jackson/Teton County Comprehensive Plan, the rural and scenic open landscape and hay meadows of South Park were highlighted at the top of the list among important areas that “should be kept free of development to the maximum extent possible to help preserve the rural character, critical wildlife habitat and important image-setting scenic vistas and river corridors, and to encourage the continuation of ranching and other types of traditional agriculture as a vital part of the community’s character.” (Comp Plan, Chapter 1: Community Vision, Page 4; Third Printing, October, 2002.)

The 2009 draft of the Comp Plan re-write, which was released in April, diverges significantly from that community vision by stating that the new priority for South Park is “the provision of housing and light industrial opportunities” and that an overarching theme for the future of South Park is to “Develop South Park from north to south as an extension of the town development pattern to provide for community needs.” (2009 Comp Plan draft, Page 110.)

Wildlife biologist and Executive Director of the Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance Franz Camenzind said that the literature review was aimed at ensuring the community has valid data to make an informed decision regarding the new Comp Plan, which will guide the amount and location of development in Jackson Hole for the next 10 to 15 years.

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“This was a first step in gathering information generated over the last four decades. We purposefully have not tried to do an overall analysis but rather let the data speak for itself,” Camenzind said. “We feel the information in this set of roughly 40 reports, studies and correspondences paints a clear picture that South Park has substantial value to a wide variety of our native wildlife – wildlife this community has repeatedly identified as being worth saving.”

“Before we make an irreparable decision, let’s make sure we understand what’s at risk,” Camenzind said. “This is not just about elk, deer and moose; the cumulative information in these studies shows the clear importance of this area for the full complement of our native species.”

Camenzind said that the importance of regions such as South Park could be underestimated in part through the myth that Jackson Hole’s wildlife could survive on public lands alone.

“For example, we know that private lands in the valley comprise 40 percent of the winter habitat for the deer that summer in Grand Teton National Park,” Camenzind said. “As humans, we have choices as to where and how we live; these species only have what’s left in the landscape.”

*The Alliance is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to responsible land stewardship in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, to ensure that human resources are in harmony with the area’s irreplaceable wildlife, scenic and other natural resources.*

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